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ANNUAL PRISON CONGRESS

his plans would be about 10 per cent less than that of the ordinary prison. This is due in part to the fact that in front of each cell in this circular arrangement there is little "dead space." That is to say, each cell occupies a part of a sector of a circle instead of a rectangular block in a large rectangular formation.

R. H. G.

The Annual Prison Congress.—A good index to the spirit of progress in the treatment of the criminal is found in the annual meetings of the American Prison Association. The writer has attended nearly every prison congress for a dozen years. During that time, not only has there been a marked change in the personnel of the delegates, but the viewpoint and character of subjects discussed are different.

Formerly, one heard much concerning the physical equipment of prisons, and methods of keeping and controlling prisoners. Now, these matters of detail are largely lost sight of in the greater and more far-reaching purpose to inaugurate an enlightened system for the correction of the offender. In many respects the recent meeting in Baltimore registers the high water mark in this respect. Subjects that were avoided ten years ago, such as the parole of life prisoners, and the prison labor problem, were openly and frankly discussed. And always the trend of the debate favored the making of men rather than money, and the highest welfare of society through saving the individual, rather than any shibboleth of punishment, much less retaliation.

The American Prison Association, as an organization, has always stood for the principle of reform rather than punishment. It has held reformation as the right means to conserve the best interests of society. Its founders were fully a generation ahead of their time. Now, it would have been difficult for the younger delegates to realize that it had taken the Association forty years to show the fallacy of revenge, and the weakness of mere punishment as a deterrent.

As a matter of fact, the general public is evidently not fully convinced of this, even yet. This was shown by a resolution, unanimously passed by the Association, re-affirming its contention for the principle of reformation. It seems that various press reports had held that recent riots in various prisons were probably due to too great leniency, and the discarding of the severest forms of punishment. The resolution asserted the belief of the congress that such disorders were due rather to inefficiency and poorly paid supervision, and the survival of barbarous methods in the midst of an awakened conscience on the righteousness of humane treatment. The congress prides itself on passing few but important resolutions. Only one other was proposed and passed, and it appealed to congress to sanction a measure which has been proposed by the attorney general, providing for the parole, after a reasonable term, of federal life prisoners. Such a law has already been enacted in a number of the states, and has proven to be, not only a boon to many worthy beneficiaries, but a blessing to the states.

The question of contract prison labor was formerly touched upon somewhat gingerly, due chiefly to the fairly equal division of opinion. The recent trend, however, has apparently been decidedly in the direction of disapproval. The movement to abolish convict contract labor in the various states has advanced in a most surprising way. State after state has joined the ranks of those which

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have adopted some form of state employment for prisoners. Those who read papers advocating the latter method seemed to have the better of the argument. Prison administrators, who had had experience with both methods, seemed to feel that the change toward state employment is inevitable and permanent. The whole spirit of the movement was significantly summarized by Dr. J. A. Leonard, Superintendent of the Mansfield Reformatory, when he said, "It is psychic, my friends: No matter how high-minded the contractor may be, (and those I have dealt with have been all that could be desired), there is nevertheless the feeling in the mind of the inmate that he is being exploited by private interests, and this feeling does not conduce to reformaton."

The farm colony idea for the care of misdemeanants, and other outdoor work on the "honor system" came in for due attention in the discussion of the congress. It is recognized, however, that the former plan is suited chiefly to the treatment of minor offenders, and that the latter is no new thing. Many prison officials have long had men on the honor roll of trusties and seldom has this confidence been violated. The parole system has taught us that the percentage of prisoners who can be trusted is larger than we had supposed. The Mansfield Reformatory has had as high as two hundred and twenty-five men working on its farm, and the Jackson, Mich., prison had fifty or more prisoners including life men, living day and night on the state farm throughout the summer. Dr. Gilmour, warden at Toronto, has said it would be easier to pick out the men he could not trust. There is a growing feeling, nevertheless, that is not desirable to work a large number of convicts on public roads in populated districts; that such work is not practicable in all climates, and that the herding of men together in barracks is bad.

A subject of far greater promise, and more prominent in the discussions of this congress than ever before, has to do with the actual character of the inmates of correctional institutions. Wider recognition is given to the physical and mental variations found among the men behind the bars. Several discriminating studies had been made and were presented to the congress. The physician of the Massachusetts Reformatory and Dr. Peyton, Supt. of the Indiana Reformatory, in their papers, revealed the injustice of holding all violators of the law to the same degree of responsibility. These speakers, and Dr. Goddard of New Jersey in a brilliant paper, expressed their belief that at least twenty-five per cent of offenders are mental defectives. One could not escape the conclusion from these deductions that any wholesale method of dealing with criminals is illogical, useless and harmful. They pointed rather to the necessity of a closer study of the individual offender, both before and after conviction, and to the prescribing of treatment suitable for each case. Fortunately the promising movement in this direction has begun, notably by Dr. Healy in the Juvenile Court of Chicago, and by the establishing of a psychological laboratory in the reformatory at Jeffersonville, Indiana, and at Raway, New Jersey.

Thus the reformatory movement seems to find its chief basis in a better understanding of individual shortcomings and possibilities. A reference to the Elmira Reformatory method of trade training without direct profit to the state, brought the statement from Mr. Scott, Superintendent of the New York prisons, "that the method had fully justified itself in the making of good citizens, and will be continued." The whole spirit of the congress was more than ever a

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reflection from the atmosphere of those institutions which have fully adopted modern methods of treatment and training. The natural fruitage is shown in the new born hope and higher aspirations of all improvable offenders.

F. EMORY LYON,

Superintendent of Central Howard Association, Chicago.

Burrell Oates Hanged at Last.—Readers of Mr. Crowell's article in the JOURNAL for September, 1912, on the case of Burrell Oates, will be interested in the following item from Waxahachie, Texas:

"Burrell Oates, a negro, who was hanged here to-day, was convicted of having murdered Sol Aronoff, a Dallas shopkeeper, eight years ago. Oates, without money or influential friends, obtained seven trials, and his case was responsible for two changes in Texas' statutes.

"Oates' fight for life was made all the more remarkable by the fact that each of the seven trial juries found him guilty of murder, and six of them condemned him to death. The other jury, being unable to agree over the penalty, caused a mistrial, although declaring the negro's guilt.

"Technicalities and at times more serious legal errors have been used repeatedly to secure new trials for Oates. The sixth trial was declared void because the jury in writing its verdict inadvertently omitted the words "in first degree" in finding Oates guilty."

J. H. W.

POLICE—IDENTIFICATION.

Report of the President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.—Major Sylvester, President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, might well congratulate that organization in his annual report for its educational work alone. The dissemination of knowledge of improved methods for doing police work is of far greater importance than the occasional apprehension of some criminal for another department. It is more especially the case with police administration because of the lack of books and articles on the practical side of policing, for of fiction and generalizations there has always been an abundance. Students of municipal affairs have accumulated and published stores of knowledge on almost every phase of municipal government except that very important one, police. The Library of Congress does not contain a dozen useful works on this subject. That this lack of information is being realized at last is shown by the appointment of a Sheldon Fellow in Harvard University to devote his time to the study of police administrative methods in Europe and the United States. The International Association will for a long time be the best means of introducing new ideas.

The great growth of automobile traffic has brought several new problems into police administration. The most pressing difficulty is the complication of street traffic, but the hardest to combat is the automobile burglar and safe-breaker. The solution for this would seem to be in the extension of regular patrols into the rural districts which has long been needed for many other causes and has already been introduced to a small degree in some states as Pennsylvania. Such a patrol would almost necessarily have to be maintained by the state as it is in England, France and Germany, where its value has been fully demonstrated. The automobile, likewise, permits a small saving in the larger departments through the use of automobile patrol-wagons. Boston has recently installed one in its largest district. The operators declare that they